



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Istook Leads Drive for Balanced Budget Amendment

Washington DC – Joined by over 100 colleagues, Rep. Ernest Istook (R-Oklahoma) is leading the push for the House of Representatives to vote on a Balanced Budget Amendment [BBA] to the U.S. Constitution.

A bipartisan letter signed by 114 House members, including Istook, was sent today to Majority Leader John Boehner and Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner, urging them to bring H.J. Res. 58, the Balanced Budget Amendment, to a floor vote next month. Istook is the principal sponsor; the lead Democrat sponsor is Rep. Gene Taylor (D-Mississippi).

The Congressional Research Service estimates that if the 104th Congress had approved the BBA in 1995-96 and if it had been ratified and become effective by 2002 it would have prevented \$3.7-trillion in deficit spending from 2002 to 2011. The BBA authorizes Congress to spend extra if necessary for national security—if supported by a 60% super-majority of Congress—but requires federal spending to balance with receipts under all other circumstances.

As the letter states, **"America's politicians will never get serious about controlling federal spending until they have no other choice. Until then, low-priority programs will continue to receive exorbitant funding and spending will remain unchecked. That is why the BBA is critical for restoring sanity to federal spending. . . . The idea of a balanced budget is part of mainstream America. Forty-nine of our 50 states, and Puerto Rico, have adopted laws requiring their state to balance their budgets."**

Istook said, **"Majority Leader Boehner and Chairman Sensenbrenner are already co-sponsors of this measure, and I'm grateful. As the letter states, we believe the Balanced Budget Amendment should be a top priority in this time of major spending and major deficits."**

"It's been 10 years since the House held a vote on this, and it will take a few years for this to be ratified and go into effect. That gives us a little time to make the tough decisions that Congress has been avoiding. This is the first and most important step toward fiscal sanity, and we've got to take it now. The American people want us to get serious about reining in federal spending, and this is the best way to make sure it will happen."

This resolution is identical to the one the House passed in 1995 with 300 votes. The Senate failed to pass the BBA by only one vote in 1996. This one-vote shortfall was all that stopped Congress from sending it to the States for almost-certain ratification.

FULL TEXT OF THE LETTER:

May 25, 2006

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Majority Leader, House of Representatives
H107 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515-6502

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6216

Dear Majority Leader Boehner and Chairman Sensenbrenner:

We appreciate your shared concern for our nation's fiscal well being and write to request your action for bringing H.J. Res. 58, the Balanced Budget Amendment, to a Floor vote during June 2006. H.J. Res. 58 is the same version that the House passed in 1995 with 300 votes. Only the Senate's failure to pass the BBA by *one* vote in 1996 kept Congress from sending it to the States where ratification was almost certain. Since then, Congress has not seriously considered this issue and now is an opportune time to rectify that lapse with a much overdue vote.

The idea of a balanced budget is part of mainstream America. Forty-nine of our 50 states, and Puerto Rico, have adopted laws requiring their state to balance their budgets. A recent National Taxpayer Union poll found large and ever-growing public support for such an amendment. The poll also found that almost 69% of registered Democrats, 66% of independent voters and 61% of Republicans favor a balanced budget amendment.

Congress balanced the budget from 1998 to 2001 and retired \$449 billion in debt. Now, ***we need to ensure that those balanced budgets were not temporary.*** Today our national debt exceeds \$8 trillion, increasing by over \$3.7 trillion since 1995 and by \$2.8 trillion since 2001 alone. Thanks to our accelerating national debt, every man, woman and child in the United States now owes nearly \$29,000. Projections are that the total debt will soar to \$11.5 trillion by 2011 and equal 68 percent of our nation's gross domestic product. The Congressional Research Service estimates that if the 104th Congress had approved the BBA in 1995-96 and if it had been ratified and become effective by 2002 it would have prevented \$3.7-trillion in deficit spending from 2002 to 2011.

The BBA authorizes Congress to spend extra if necessary for national security—if supported by a 60% super-majority of Congress—but requires federal spending to balance with receipts under all other circumstances.

The President's plan calls only for halving the annual deficit by 2009. Passage of the BBA is the first step in greatly accelerating deficit reduction, but a Floor vote on H.J. Res. 58 is necessary to show that Congress is serious for bringing deficits under control and reigning in our debt. Swift action by Congress is critical, as ratification by three-fourths of the states requires time and the BBA's provisions will not affect the budget until fiscal year 2012 or with the second fiscal year beginning after its ratification, whichever is later.

America's politicians will never get serious about controlling federal spending until they have no other choice. Until then, low-priority programs will continue to receive exorbitant funding and spending will remain unchecked. That is why the BBA is critical for restoring sanity to federal spending. We believe getting the BBA through committee and onto the floor deserves a very high priority. Passage of this amendment is necessary to ensure that our children inherit the American Dream, not the national debt.

H.J. Res. 58 enjoys the support of 128 bipartisan cosponsors. We look forward to working with you for the reporting of H.J. Res. 58 out of the Committee on the Judiciary and its bringing up before the full House of Representatives for a Floor vote during June 2006.

Sincerely,

LIST OF SIGNERS (Alphabetized):

Robert Aderholt	Geoff Davis	Wally Herger	Charlie Norwood
Todd Akin	JoAnn Davis	Peter Hoekstra	Butch Otter
Spencer Bachus	Nathan Deal	Bob Inglis	Stevan Pearce
Gresham Barrett	Mario Diaz-Balart	Darrell Issa	Mike Pence
Roscoe Bartlett	John Doolittle	Ernest Istook	Joseph Pitts
Joe Barton	Thelma Drake	William Jenkins	Todd Platts
Charles Bass	John Duncan	Sam Johnson	Tom Price
Bob Beauprez	Chet Edwards	Walter Jones	George Radanovich
Marion Berry	Vernon Ehlers	Mark Kennedy	David Reichert
Rob Bishop	Tom Feeney	Steve King	Mike Ross
Marsha Blackburn	Jeff Flake	Jack Kingston	Edward Royce
John Boozman	Mark Foley	Frank Lucas	Jim Ryun
Leonard Boswell	Harold Ford	Connie Mack	John Salazar
Allen Boyd	Luis Fortuno	Donald Manzullo	David Scott
Kevin Brady	Virginia Foxx	Kenny Marchant	Pete Sessions
Sherrod Brown	Trent Franks	Jim Marshall	John Shadegg
Ginny Brown-Waite	Scott Garrett	Jim Matheson	Christopher Shays
Michael Burgess	Jim Gibbons	Thaddeus McCotter	Bill Shuster
Ken Calvert	Wayne Gilchrest	Patrick McHenry	Michael Simpson
Chris Cannon	Phil Gingrey	Mike McIntyre	Cliff Stearns
Ed Case	Louie Gohmert	Cathy McMorris	John Sullivan
Chris Chocola	Virgil Goode	Charlie Melancon	Charles Taylor
Emanuel Cleaver	Sam Graves	John Mica	Gene Taylor
Howard Coble	Mark Green	Jeff Miller	Lee Terry
Tom Cole	Ralph Hall	Gary Miller	Zach Wamp
Mike Conaway	Katherine Harris	Jerry Moran	Lynn Westmoreland
Jim Costa	J.D. Hayworth	Marilyn Musgrave	Joe Wilson
Barbara Cubin	Joel Hefley	Sue Myrick	
John Culberson	Jeb Hensarling	Randy Neugebauer	

TEXT OF THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

H.J.RES.58

109th CONGRESS

Proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years after the date of its submission for ratification:

`Article ____

`SECTION 1. Total outlays for any fiscal year shall not exceed total receipts for that fiscal year, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House of Congress shall provide by law for a specific excess of outlays over receipts by a rollcall vote.

`SECTION 2. The limit on the debt of the United States held by the public shall not be increased, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House shall provide by law for such an increase by a rollcall vote.

`SECTION 3. Prior to each fiscal year, the President shall transmit to the Congress a proposed budget for the United States Government for that fiscal year in which total outlays do not exceed total receipts.

`SECTION 4. No bill to increase revenue shall become law unless approved by a majority of the whole number of each House by a rollcall vote.

`SECTION 5. The Congress may waive the provisions of this article for any fiscal year in which a declaration of war is in effect. The provisions of this article may be waived for any fiscal year in which the United States is engaged in military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is so declared by a joint resolution, adopted by a majority of the whole number of each House, which becomes law.

`SECTION 6. The Congress shall enforce and implement this article by appropriate legislation, which may rely on estimates of outlays and receipts.

`SECTION 7. Total receipts shall include all receipts of the United States Government except those derived from borrowing. Total outlays shall include all outlays of the United States Government except for those for repayment of debt principal.

`SECTION 8. This article shall take effect beginning with the later of the second fiscal year beginning after its ratification or the first fiscal year beginning after December 31, 2010.'.